

Members

Sen. Thomas Wyss, Co-Chairperson
Sen. James Merritt
Sen. Vaneta Becker
Sen. Phil Boots
Sen. Michael Delph
Sen. Allen Paul
Sen. Ed Charbonneau
Sen. Vi Simpson
Sen. Earline Rogers
Sen. James Lewis
Sen. Jean Breaux
Rep. Terri Austin, Co-Chairperson
Rep. David Niezgodski
Rep. Robert Bischoff
Rep. Nancy Dembowski
Rep. Earl Harris
Rep. Phil Pflum
Rep. Vern Tincher
Rep. Cleo Duncan
Rep. James Buck
Rep. William Davis
Rep. Thomas Saunders
Rep. Ed Soliday



JOINT STUDY COMMITTEE ON MASS TRANSIT AND TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES

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Authority: IC 2-5-28 (Established by SEA 105-2007)

MEETING MINUTES¹

Meeting Date: September 10, 2007
Meeting Time: 10:00 A.M.
Meeting Place: State House, 200 W. Washington St.,
Senate Chambers
Meeting City: Indianapolis, Indiana
Meeting Number: 2

Members Present: Sen. Thomas Wyss, Co-Chairperson; Sen. James Merritt; Sen. Vaneta Becker; Sen. Phil Boots; Sen. Michael Delph; Sen. Ed Charbonneau; Sen. Vi Simpson; Sen. Earline Rogers; Sen. James Lewis; Rep. Terri Austin, Co-Chairperson; Rep. David Niezgodski; Rep. Robert Bischoff; Rep. Nancy Dembowski; Rep. Earl Harris; Rep. Vern Tincher; Rep. Cleo Duncan; Rep. Ed Soliday.

Members Absent: Sen. Allen Paul; Sen. Jean Breaux; Rep. Phil Pflum; Rep. James Buck; Rep. William Davis; Rep. Thomas Saunders.

I. Call to Order and Introduction of Members

Co-Chair Senator Tom Wyss called the second meeting of the Joint Study Committee on Mass Transit and Transportation Alternatives (Joint Committee) to order at 10:15. After the Joint Committee members introduced themselves, Senator Wyss turned over the meeting to Co-

¹ Exhibits and other materials referenced in these minutes can be inspected and copied in the Legislative Information Center in Room 230 of the State House in Indianapolis, Indiana. Requests for copies may be mailed to the Legislative Information Center, Legislative Services Agency, 200 West Washington Street, Indianapolis, IN 46204-2789. A fee of \$0.15 per page and mailing costs will be charged for copies. These minutes are also available on the Internet at the General Assembly homepage. The URL address of the General Assembly homepage is <http://www.in.gov/legislative/>. No fee is charged for viewing, downloading, or printing minutes from the Internet.

Chair Representative Terri Austin.

II. Local Transportation Authorities

●Christine Altman, President, Central Indiana Regional Transportation Authority (CIRTA)

Ms. Altman introduced Ehren Bingaman, the new executive director of CIRTA. Ms. Altman informed the Joint Committee that Indiana, despite previously having the largest interurban transportation system in the country, has focused solely on developing its highways since World War II. She suggested looking at transit on a regional basis but stated that local governments need tools, such as taxing authority, to implement a transit plan.

Senator Wyss asked about the progress CIRTA has made since its creation in 2004. The Indianapolis Regional Transportation Council and the Indianapolis Metropolitan Planning Organization are studying a fixed transit route from northeastern to downtown Indianapolis. Ms. Altman stated that the organizations will need additional funding to be eligible for federal dollars. In response to a question from Representative Austin, Ms. Altman stated that federal funding would be earmarked for planning purposes and that some surrounding counties have received federal earmarks for bus programs, but that local matching dollars are still needed. Ms. Altman further stated that mass transit would be a magnet for development and result in a shift in land use.

●John Swanson, Executive Director, Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC)

Mr. Swanson reviewed the history of NIRPC with the Joint Committee.² Mr. Swanson discussed NIRPC's membership, revenue sources and budget, and transportation plans and programs. Mr. Swanson presented Joint Committee members with a copy of a resolution in support of mass transit adopted by Northwest Indiana Quality of Life Council, a public-private partnership in Lake, Porter, and LaPorte Counties.³ Representative Tinchler asked whether NIRPC had explored the possibility of traveling by ferry from Marquette Park to Navy Pier in Chicago. Mr. Swanson stated that the subject is currently under study.

●Mike Dearing, Executive Director, Indianapolis Metropolitan Planning Organization (IMPO)

Mr. Dearing informed the Joint Committee that IMPO serves eight counties and is the largest metropolitan planning organization in Indiana. The largest challenge facing IMPO is providing adequate, reliable, and financially stable transportation to the entire IMPO area, not just from Noblesville to downtown Indianapolis. Mr. Dearing stated that most transportation funding currently goes to expanding highways, which does not ease congestion. He suggested that the state needs to focus on forming partnerships to identify other means of transportation. Senator Boots asked whether funding allocated to expand the Monon Trail could be used to incorporate a mass transit or light rail component. Mr. Dearing responded that use of the Indiana State Fair train route would be possible.

●Michael Terry, Vice-President, Business Development, IndyGo

Mr. Terry began his comments by stating that Indianapolis is a regional economy, witnessing

²See Exhibits A and B.

³See Exhibit C.

growth in the surrounding counties. IndyGo's Primary concerns are congestion mitigation and attaining air quality goals. Mr. Terry stated that it is important for Indianapolis to develop cross-county multimodal transit to spur economic development. Senator Boots asked Mr. Terry to compare the average cost of a ride on the IndyGo bus system to the cost of driving a car the same distance. Mr. Terry referred the Joint Committee to www.327ride.net, the website of Central Indiana Commuter Services, which provides a commute cost calculator.

III. Parris Glendening, President, Smart Growth Leadership Institute⁴

Parris Glendening, former governor of Maryland, discussed the interconnectivity of transportation-related issues, such as economic growth, health, and climate. Governor Glendening cited Connecticut and Rhode Island as examples of states that are assuming larger roles with respect to mass transit. He stated that smart growth of a community entails the creation of a sense of place for its residents and that mass transit is part of the process.

Representative Austin asked how to counter the criticism that mass transit is too expensive and does not provide a return on its investment. Governor Glendening agreed that mass transit has greater startup costs but that, unlike highways, mass transit decreases air pollution and increases the mobility of the elderly, employment opportunities, and surrounding property values. Governor Glendening referred the Joint Committee to the website of the Smart Growth Leadership Institute, www.sgli.org, for copies of studies he referenced in his testimony.

Senator Wyss stated that, due to Indiana's concentration of interstate highways, the amount of goods transported through the state will double in the next ten years, necessitating the building of more highways. Governor Glendening agreed that roadways will remain a significant means of transportation but emphasized that other transportation needs are better met by other modes of transportation.

Senator Rogers acknowledged that Indiana needs to take a leadership role regarding mass transit and asked Governor Glendening to recommend a state that could serve as a blueprint for Indiana. Governor Glendening responded that New Mexico recently built a light rail system from Santa Fe to Albuquerque; the state provided funding and planning assistance and allowed the local governments to raise taxes to pay for the light rail system, and the local governments established mixed use zones near the system.

In response to a question from Representative Bischoff, Governor Glendening reiterated his belief that the cost of gas will increase to \$7 per gallon in the near future. Governor Glendening shared his opinion that switching from gasoline to ethanol merely masks the problem and that alternative means of transportation are needed to reduce fuel consumption and, in turn, fuel prices.

IV. Other Business

Representative Duncan repeated her request from the August 30 meeting for a complete inventory of all roads and other transportation routes in Indiana to determine whether existing infrastructure can be used for mass transit.

The Joint Committee agreed to schedule its next meeting for October 9. Senator Wyss asked for suggestions for presenters; he mentioned Marisol Simon, the Regional Administrator for Region 5 of the Federal Transit Administration. Representative Austin

⁴See Exhibit D.

suggested Marilee Utter, the president of Citiventure Associates, LLC, as well as an individual who could discuss the economic impact of mass transit. Representative Duncan suggested the husband of former state representative Sue Scholer.

V. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 12:00 p.m.